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1945-1950

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SUMMARY

~~This~~ essay examines the U. S. occupation of Japan for the five years between World War II and the Korean War. This period re-shaped U. S. - Japanese relations during the last twenty years from one of enemy to ally and is responsible for the present cooperation between the two nations. Future relations will still be effected by this period as long as Japan's Constitution exists in its present form and as long as Japan's economy is so closely associated with the U. S. economy. (1)

On 30 August 1945, a U. S. C-54 transport aircraft named "Bataan," landed at Atsugi airfield, home of Japan's most fanatic kamikaze squadron, outside of Yokohama, Japan. Out of this unarmed airplane stepped the man who had become the most legendary and possibly the most controversial military figure in American history, General Of The Army Douglas MacArthur. With this dramatic beginning U. S. military government in Japan commenced. During the next five years, under the guidance of MacArthur, Japan was to undergo many changes. These changes were to influence U. S. - Japanese relations for the next two decades. In order to understand what effect this period will have on future U. S. - Japanese relations it is necessary to examine what those changes were and their influence on the last 20 years. To examine all of them in detail would take an entire book and many books have been written on the subject. We must therefore limit this study to the Japanese Government and the new Constitution (as rewritten during this period), to the reconstruction of Japan as a major industrial power, and to relationships between the two peoples during the occupation.

Early in the occupation, General MacArthur determined that before any real progress could be made in the area of self-government, "there had to be sweeping changes in the fundamental law of the land - the constitution".¹ The Meiji Constitution was the basis for the perpetuation of the Imperial system which allowed the Japanese military to develop

¹. Douglas MacArthur, "Reminiscences," (McGraw-Hill, 1964) p.298.

As stated in Article III "The person of the Emperor is sacred and inviolable". Hermann Roesler was the legal advisor to the Japanese government during the drafting of the Meiji Constitution and was consulted on all of its provisions. His "commentary" says of this section "the Emperor holds His power from Heaven through the medium of His glorious ancestors, but not from any human authorization or concession; consequently He cannot be held responsible to His subjects, but to Heaven alone."² Other articles of the constitution gave the Emperor control over the administration of the country and absolute control of the military. The only restriction was contained in Article V. "the Emperor exercises the legislative power with the consent of the Imperial Diet." However, the Emperor controlled the Imperial Diet by the fact that the constitution gave him the power over the manner in which the Diet was selected, when it met, when it opened and closed, and in fact, whether it ever met at all. Coupled with his power to issue laws, when the Diet was not in session, it can be seen how absolute the power of the Emperor could be if he chose to exercise it. Because of this power of the Emperor, it is evident that to carry out the provisions of Allied policy calling for self government, Japan did need a completely new constitution.

General MacArthur recognized this need at the time he was appointed Supreme Commander and after much discussion the Japanese prime minister, at this time Baron Shidehara, appointed a commission in October 1945 to

² Johannes Siemes, "Hermann Roesler And The Making Of The Meiji State," (Sophia University, Tokyo, 1968) p 61.

draft a new constitution. When the draft was presented in February 1946, it proved to be little more than a re-worded version of the old constitution. Because of the delay and the inadequate result of the constitutional revision done by the Japanese, General MacArthur instructed his Chief of the Governmental Section, General Courtney Whitney to assist and advise the Japanese. In effect the U. S. drew up a draft to be considered by the Japanese which was based on these guidelines: "(a) the emperor system would be preserved, though modified to bring it within the constitutional limitations and subject to the ultimate will of the people; (b) war and war-making would be forsworn - a concept that had been proposed to MacArthur by Prime Minister Shidehara; and (c) all forms of feudalism would be abolished."³

The draft that General Whitney and staff proposed took the Japanese by surprise. Foreign Minister Yoshida was one of the group opposed to this draft, however, the Prime Minister took the draft to the Emperor and apparently to the great surprise of the opposition, he enthusiastically endorsed it. From that point on, it became only a matter of time until the constitution was adopted. It was promulgated on 3 November, 1946 to become effective six months later, which it did. Because of the influence of the Supreme Commander and his staff, Japan became a Constitutional Monarchy, with a Bill of Rights and with all power now centered in the people instead of the Emperor. Despite the drastic changes this brought about it has remained unchanged in the eighteen years since the

³Courtney Whitney, "MacArthur, His Rendezvous With History ", (Alfred A. Knopf, 1956) p. 249.

occupation ended, and is the basis for all U. S. - Japanese relations. This constitution not only changed Japan into a Constitutional Monarchy but included the now famous "no war clause," which is Article 9, Chapter II of the Japanese Constitution. It reads "aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes. In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the State will not be recognized."

This clause has had a profound effect on United States - Japanese relations in the past and will have significant influence on future relations between these two countries. Much debate has been centered around this clause and whether or not it prevents Japan from having any armed forces whatsoever. "The establishment of the Defense Agency and the Self-Defense Forces, perhaps inevitably, aroused argument in many quarters that these acts were in contravention of Article 9 of the post-war Constitution renouncing war, and were, in fact, so many steps toward rearmament - a controversy that has continued to this day."⁴ In spite of this debate Japan has organized and presently maintains even though limited in size, a Self-Defense Force with land, sea, and air contingents. Originally this Force was organized, under the name of the National Police Reserve, in 1950 on instructions of General MacArthur. Its initial

⁴ Shigeru Yoshida, "The Yoshida Memoirs", (Houghton Mifflin Co., 1962) p. 191.

purpose was to fill the gap left by the transfer of U. S. Occupation Troops to the Korean War battlefield. Since that time, even though this Self-Defense Force has not been overly popular with the Japanese people, the United States has supported this Force both politically and with arms and equipment. Leftwing groups have used this to stir up anti-U. S. sentiments and probably will continue to do so. Former Prime Minister Yoshida in his "Memoirs" published in 1962 expressed his opposition to rearmament because of its drain on the national wealth and because the desire of the people to rearm is not present. In 1967, however, he recognized the changing times when he said "I opposed rearmament by Japan and instead stressed the need for my nation to concentrate upon economic development. I took that view because I considered it to be the only possible policy at the time - and most certainly the wisest. Since then, however, the situation in which Japan finds itself, both at home and abroad, has changed completely."⁵ Mr. Yoshida further explains that he believes Japan must provide for its own defense by making an economic contribution to international cooperation and by having good relations with countries having a Pacific Ocean frontier. He does not advocate increasing armaments but in sharing the costs of peace and prosperity and further recognizes that Japan has advanced "Beyond the stage of depending upon the strength of other countries"⁶ in the matter of defense.

⁵ Shigeru Yoshida, "Japan's Decisive Century 1867-1967". (Frederick A. Praeger, 1967) p. 106.

⁶ IBID.

It would seem that this feeling has considerable support among the Japanese people. However, with the rapid rise in the Japanese economy in the last few years has also come a rise in nationalism. This is a very important factor in future U. S. - Japanese relations. Another factor is that the industrial giants of Japan would welcome increased expenditures for arms as a further stimulus to Japan's economic growth. Before any conclusions can be reached, as to the future, it is necessary to return to 1945 and to examine the economy of Japan at that time, the occupation and its economic policy, and the resulting growth of Japan's economy since 1952.

Japan, in 1945, was a nation on the verge of collapse. "The cost to Japan and its people...was heavy. Virtually all that had been achieved up to that date was destroyed."⁷ This statement only hints at the disaster that had occurred. Over two million Japanese died, her cities were in ruin, and her industry was either destroyed by the war or allowed to become obsolete and in disrepair. In addition Japan had to give up all the territory that she had acquired outside the home islands. As a consequence she lost most of her raw materials and a large part of her overseas markets. An even more important factor was that for years Japan was consuming a greater quantity of food, especially rice, than she was able to produce. With her merchant fleet destroyed and no foreign trade available health and malnutrition were a serious problem. This was the scene that greeted General MacArthur when he arrived in Japan. Early

7- 7. IBID p. 43.

in the occupation, he instituted two measures which set the tone for future relations between U. S. Forces and the Japanese. First, he issued an order which restricted the consumption of the meager food resources of Japan by U. S. Troops and second, he requested that the U. S. supplement Japan's food supply by sending food to Japan. Neither of these acts were included in the instructions MacArthur received for the conduct of the occupation. They helped prevent starvation and were among the first steps that started the Japanese economy on the long road back.

The next steps were not so simple. As mentioned before, the Japanese industrial capacity was seriously impaired due to war and obsolescence. While the Government Section of MacArthur's Headquarters was providing Japan with a new constitution, the Economics Section set out to build Japan a new economy. "We fed the Japanese, but we didn't intend to feed them forever. I directed my staff to work out the plan we needed to make Japan selfsufficient as soon as it was humanely possible."⁸ One of the programs that was instituted early in the occupation was to develop a free enterprise system. To accomplish this objective the great Japanese monopolies, the Zaibatsu, had to be dissolved and were. In addition a labor organization was encouraged and Japanese labor acquired the right to have collective bargaining. These actions may have actually retarded Japanese reconstruction, since they removed much of the capital base temporarily from the economy and gave the Communist Party a strong foundation within

8. MacArthur, p. 307

the labor unions. The Japanese economy overcame both of these conditions. For these first two years, the economy was devoted to feeding the people and rehabilitating the basic industries such as steel and coal.

At this time U. S. policy towards Japan underwent a major change. "This change in basic U. S. policy became clear in 1948, when assistance funds for promoting trade, as well as commodity grants authorized under the Foreign Assistance Act, were extended to Japan. Interim reparations were suspended, and amendments in the Economic Decentralization Law and the Antimonopoly Law contributed toward relaxing the major restrictions hitherto imposed upon the Country's economy"⁹. Also during this period of time the production of food had increased substantially due to better farming methods and increased use of fertilizers.

Another change was soon to take place. Early in 1949, Joseph Dodge, a U. S. banker and fiscal expert, arrived in Japan and in concert with Finance Minister Ikeda, advised the establishment of a balanced budget and the end of government subsidies for exports and imports. Both of these measures were carried out and Japan's economy was stabilized for the first time since prior to the war.

The next drastic change was brought about by the invasion of South Korea by the North Koreans. Japan became the base for the United Nations Forces during the Korean War and the purchase of needed supplies from Japan by these forces provided the added impetus necessary to create a boom of substantial proportions. Production increased by one-half and

⁹. Yoshida, "Japan's Decisive Century, pp. 71-72

corporate income tripled and quadrupled.

With the beginning of the Korean War the occupation was, for all practical purposes, at an end. On 8 September 1951 the treaty of peace with Japan was signed. Thus concluded six years of allied occupation which included many dramatic moments one of which was the dismissal of General MacArthur in April of 1951 and his triumphant return home. As a small participant in part of this drama, it was apparent that this was the end of an era, and so it was. General MacArthur has been characterized by many historians as holding a unique place in U. S. history. He served as a General Officer for over 45 years and his service included two world wars, the Korean War, some minor skirmishes, and the occupation of Japan. It is, however, during the occupation of Japan that MacArthur made his greatest impact on history. This impact still exists today in the relations that the occupation created between Japan and the United States, in the present Japanese Constitution, and in the dynamic Japanese economy. All of these are innerrelated but shall be examined separately to establish their individual impact on the future and then collectively to arrive at the final conclusions.

Several events took place that are significant in current and future Japanese relations because of their apparently lasting effect. One of these, of course, was the behavior of U. S. occupation troops. These troops created an aura of goodwill and understanding which prevented animosity arising that would have seriously impaired our occupation. The Japanese were greatly surprised at the treatment they received as a conquered people. They expected slavery or worse and got fair treatment, food and eventual rehabilitation. Even though the U. S. policy did not include being a benefactor to the Japanese, this is eventually what happened.

The effect that this had was one of acquiescence instead of resistance. Even though the Japanese are an independent people who feel their success is due to their own industry and intelligence, a special relationship exists that does not exist between the U. S. and the rest of Asia. Much of this is in the form of the many thousand of individual contacts that arose due to the occupation. Another event that smoothed the path of the occupation was the treatment accorded the Emperor. Many important U. S. figures called for his prosecution as a war criminal. MacArthur prevented this and the Emperor renounced his so-called divinity which paved the way for the constitution to transfer the power of government away from the Emperor and his close advisors to the Japanese people. It also prevented a barrier being created between the U. S. and Japanese that would not have easily healed. The Japanese still regard their Emperor with high esteem and he has been a unifying force in Japan since the war.

In examining the history of the post war Japanese Constitution the most significant fact is that there has been no evident desire on the part of the Japanese people to change it. The government has also shown no inclination to effect changes.

Japan's economy has continued to grow since the impetus of the Korean War boom and Japan has reached the point of having the second highest gross national product among the non-communist nations. Very little of this GNP is devoted to defense spending and as a consequence the Japanese economy has grown at an even faster rate.

There are several conclusions to be reached regarding the future of U. S. - Japanese relations. These conclusions are limited to those areas where there exists a strong influence stemming from the occupation.

The strongest influence that remains is the Japanese Constitution which was substantially rewritten by U. S. military government staff members. In the 1969 elections Prime Minister Eisaku Sato's pro U. S. Liberal Democratic Party substantially increased the majority it held in the Japanese Parliament (the Diet). This assured continued strong relations between Japan and the United States. The future of this constitution seems secure at present, notwithstanding the communist and others promoting internal strife in Japan. It provided Japan with a sufficiently flexible document to assure representative government. The "no-war clause" may be subject to change or repeal but it would not effect the more basic articles and would in itself effect only Japan's foreign relations and rearmament posture. Since the present government is likely to remain in power for the next several years, the United States can expect a cooperative attitude and continued extensions of the U. S. - Japanese Security Treaty. It can also expect an increase in Japanese expenditures for its own self-defense which will reduce the need for U. S. forces to protect Japan. Since Japan is a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty it would have to withdraw from this treaty and would almost certainly have to repeal the "no-war clause" to develop an atomic arsenal. From statements made by Prime Minister Sato it is unlikely that his government will enter into the nuclear arms race in the near future, however, aggressive actions by Red China could change the mind of the present Japanese Government. Regardless of this Japan should continue to operate with its present constitution substantially unchanged in the foreseeable future.

The next influence, that remains from the occupation, is the effect that the occupation had on the present Japanese economy. Even though the Japanese people are justifiably proud of their achievements in the

economic progress of their country, the fact is, that without U. S. assistance and trade developed during the occupation the Japanese economy would not have advanced to its present state. As a consequence Japan can afford to pay for most of its own defense and it can afford to help its undeveloped neighbors in Asia. We should encourage her to do so and gradually reduce the burdens of our commitments to these countries.

The final influence that still exists is that which resulted from the many contacts between the U. S. and Japan which began during occupation years. These contacts have resulted in a better understanding between our two countries and in investment and increasing trade, all of which has been beneficial to both countries, we should continue and expand these relations so that we can look forward to an improved political and economic climate in Asia as a result of U. S. - Japanese cooperation.

Even though the occupation of Japan ended over eighteen years ago, the influence of Douglas MacArthur and his military government will continue to be felt for a number of years to come. The constitution they provided, the economy they helped develop and the Japanese who were rehabilitated all stand as evidence of the success of this era in U. S. - Japanese relations. An ally was created from an enemy and through continued cooperation this alliance should be profitable to both nations for the foreseeable future.

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